

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

1551-66
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29 APR 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Officer, DD/S&T

SUBJECT: Satellite Aspects of the 27 April 1966
New York Times Article

1. There is nothing in the third article on the CIA appearing in the New York Times which indicates any security leaks, or for that matter any sizable insight into the satellite operations of either CIA or components of the Department of Defense. Further, there does not appear to be any obvious intent to present false information; where incorrect information does occur, erroneous interpretation of unclassified information or a slight journalistic re-interpretation of "Spy in the Sky" comments by other writers (for example, The Invisible Government) appears to be the case. Specific observations and comments are as follows:

A. "With complex machines circling the earth at 17,000 miles an hour, CIA agents are able to relax in their carpeted offices beside the Potomac and count the intercontinental missiles poised in Soviet Kazakhstan, monitor the conversations between Moscow and a Soviet submarine near Tahiti, follow the countdown of a sputnik launching as easily as that of a Gemini capsule in Florida, track the electronic imprint of an adversary's bombers and watch for the heat traces of his missiles."--Most of these observations are not true, for example:

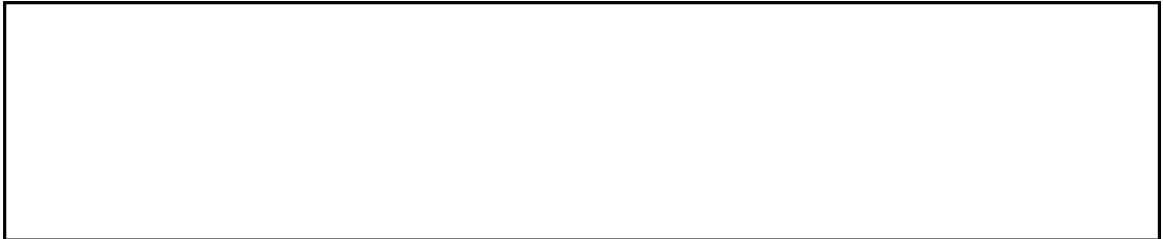
(1) No mention is made of NPIC and NSA, but rather is implied that all satellite-collected data is analyzed at the CIA Headquarters building.

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Article.

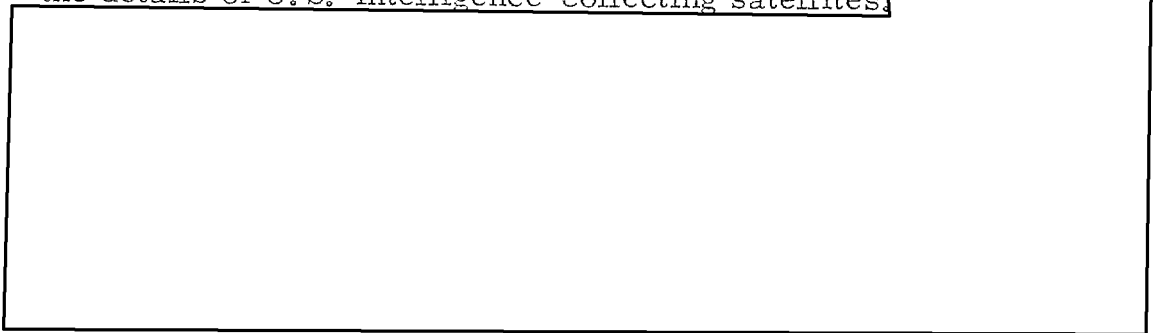
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(4) Midas satellites developed by the Department of Defense were supposed to be able to "watch for the heat traces" of Soviet missiles, but the technological complexity of such a system proved to be too great and a different approach, using synchronous satellites, is currently under study by the Department of Defense.

B. "CIA cameras and other snooping equipment are riding in spacecraft that are otherwise the responsibility of the Defense Department." -- The comment regarding CIA cameras in Department of Defense spacecraft is generally true; however, there are DoD cameras in DoI spacecraft. Two other comments-- a reference to American "Samos" satellites and a statement to the effect that "No clear breakdown of responsibilities and cost is available" -- imply that the authors have only surmised as to the details of U.S. intelligence-collecting satellites.

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C. Along this same line, reference is made to Secretary McNamara's statement before a congressional committee regarding the "inspection of orbiting objects in the satellite interceptor Thor program." The authors deduct from this testimony that "the United States could orbit a satellite capable of photographing and otherwise 'inspecting' Soviet space spies", while in fact the capability alluded to by McNamara was a missile (not satellite)-borne photographic capability.

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Article.

7. Mention is made of capsule recovery operations involving C-130 aircraft in the Hawaiian area and the fact that these planes have a "70% catching average." The fact that the Space Systems Division of the Air Force operates capsule recovery aircraft is generally unclassified, although the Gilpatrick directive restricted the release of details regarding their operations. Description of the recovery procedure was previously described in some detail in Honolulu newspapers (1961 and 1962) as well as pictorial in an unclassified documentary film prepared by Lockheed for the Air Force. The correct "catching average" for those recovery capsules which were in fact deorbited is as follows:

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CORONA Program -- 37 out of 93 (93.5%)

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It should be noted that 51 out of the last 51 and 68 out of the last 69 CORONA recovery capsules have been successfully air-snatched.

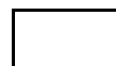
2. Thus, it appears almost certain that the information described in the article came from a variety of unclassified sources and that interpretation of how satellites for intelligence collection are controlled and managed and what specific data is attained from their products is strictly journalistic speculation.

SIGNED



Deputy Director
Office of Special Projects

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[REDACTED] (29 April 66)

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